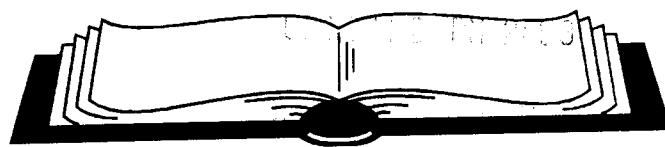# NEW JERSEY

2000-2001
Guidelines and
Application

BEST

PRACTICES

Deadline for Application to County Office:
NOVEMBER 27, 2000

The Best Practices application is a public document. The information that you provide will serve as the official record. Review the application prior to submission to ensure accuracy and adherence to the guidelines. Type or keyboard information requested on this page and page 2, if applicable.

Category Citizenship/Character Education ___(Application is limited to one category. See page 3 for details.)
Practice Name Conquest: A Freshman Quest for a Life of Conquence
Number of Schools with Practice 1 (If more than one school or district, read and complete information on page 2.)

County	Union
District (Proper Name)	Cranford Public Schools
Address	Street/P. O. Box 132 Thomas Street
	City Cranford, New Jersey 07016 Zip Code
Telephone 908-709-6207 or 8872	Fax 908-709-1708 Email sternwal@cranfordschools.org
Chief School Administrator	Emalene Renna Ed.D.
Nominated School #1 (Proper Name)	Cranford High School
Address	201 West End Place
	Street/P. O. Box
Cranford, New Jersey 07016
City   Zip Code
Telephone 908-709-6272	Fax 908-276-6552 Email dachnowi@cranfordschools.org
Principal	Dr. Laura Cardine
Program Developer(s)	Eileen Dachnowicz and the Conquest Faculty Team
Application Prepared By	Eileen Dachnowicz
Chief School Administrator's or Charter School Lead Person's Signature	_Emalene Renna_

FOR USE BY COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS ONLY

Approved: _X_ Yes ___ No   County Superintendent's Signature _____

NEW JERSEY STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

NEW JERSEY
BEST PRACTICES
2000-2001 APPLICATION

Application Requirements: <u>Failure to comply with the procedures for submission of the application will result in the elimination of the application.</u>

1. **RESPONSES to the information and the statements below must be ANONYMOUS and ACCURATE.** No reference should be made to the names of the district, the school(s) or community. Use the words "the school" or "the schools" in referring to the applicant in responding to the statements

2. **USE ONLY THE SPACE PROVIDED ON THE APPLICATION FORM on pages 1, 2 (if applicable), and 4.** Do <u>not</u> include any additional materials, as they will not be reviewed in the selection process.

3. Application must be **keyboarded on 8 ½" x 11" white paper, portrait** format. **Twelve-point or larger computer font or fourteen-pitch or larger typewritten font** must be used. (This sentence is in twelve-point Times New Roman.)

4. **KEYBOARDED RESPONSES** to all the statements below must be **no more than a total of four pages. Keyboard and number the statement followed by the response.** Format your response for accuracy and clarity.

5. **The information on page 4 and the responses** to statements must be copied **on one side of the page. The information on pages 1 and 2 (if applicable)** must be copied **on one side of the page.** Staple pages 1, 2 (if applicable), 4, and the keyboarded responses together, in that same order.

6. **The original application must be signed by the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person, indicating his/her approval.**

7. **The original and seven copies of the application** must be submitted to the county superintendent of schools by **November 27, 2000,** with the **Itemized List of District Applications** form. Keep the seven copies of each application together with the original containing the signature of the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person on the top of each set.

The following data is required to assist the panelists in the evaluation of the application:

Type of School	Grade Levels	Practice Name Conquest: A Freshman Quest for a Life of Consequence
___ Elementary School	_____	Number of Schools with Practice __1__
___ Middle School	_____	Number of Districts with Practice __1__
___ Junior High School	_____	Location __ Urban/City __ Suburban With Urban Characteristics
XXX High School	9th	xx Suburban __ Small City/Town __ Rural
___ Other: _____	_____	

Check the ONE CATEGORY into which the practice best fits.

___ Arts (Visual and Performing Arts)	___ Educational Technology	___ Safe Learning Environment
___ Assessment/Evaluation	___ Gifted and Talented Programs	___ School-to-Careers/Workplace Readiness
___ Bilingual Education and Diversity	___ Health and Physical Education	___ Science
XXX Citizenship/Character Education	___ Language Arts Literacy	___ Social Studies
___ Early Childhood Education Programs	___ Mathematics	___ Special Education
___ Educational Support/Guidance and Counseling Programs	___ Professional Development	___ World Languages
	___ Public Engagement (family involvement and partnerships with business, community, school districts, and/or higher education)	

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1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.

2. List the specific *Core Curriculum Content Standards, including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards,** addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standard(s). Provide an example to substantiate your response.

3. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.

4. Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/or district.

*The 1996 edition of the *Core Curriculum Content Standards* published by the New Jersey State Department of Education was disseminated to all districts and charter schools and is available on line through the department's web site at http://www.state.nj.us/education.

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative, how it promotes high student achievement, and how it can be replicated.

"CON*quest*" is a required interdisciplinary unit for all freshmen in our high school based on a "life of consequence." In 1998 a group of ninth grade teachers got together and decided that we wanted to set our freshmen on the right course for high school and for life. Moreover, we envisioned a unit that would unite all freshmen in a common quest and would foster character education through an appealing and interdisciplinary approach. Unlike middle school teachers who get to know students personally through teaming, we felt our high school's structure (because of the constraints of time and scheduling) did not engender personalization. We hoped this unit would bridge the gap.

Our objectives then were:
1. *To lead students in developing a portfolio on a common theme that connects learning with life.*
2. *To encourage students to become contributing members of society.*
3. *To promote service-learning in the school as an authentic learning strategy.*
4. *To provide creative assignments that appeal to multiple intelligences while fulfilling the Core Curriculum and Cross-Content Standards.*

We decided on the theme of "a life of consequence" because our mission statement asserts that as a community we are striving "to choose and enjoy a life of consequence." After much reading and discussion, we shaped a portfolio of five interesting readings and forty suggested class activities on this theme.

To kick off the project, a guest speaker who had survived obstacles addressed the freshman class at a special assembly. A supervisor (in our case, we have a Supervisor of Academic Affairs) went into each freshman English class to explain the unit, distribute the binders, and to spark the students' thoughts on "what really is a life of consequence." Next, the ninth grade subject teachers periodically continued the theme, using the interdisciplinary readings. For example, a social studies teacher led the class in a discussion of Auden's poem, "The Unknown Citizen" while a science teacher discussed the brave response of a Greek philosopher to a command from Alexander the Great. The ultimate goal of the unit was for all students to show their understanding of a life of consequence through their portfolio of ten interdisciplinary assignments, one of which was a service project that put the concept into action.

In May freshmen handed in their portfolios. A team of teachers, using a predetermined rubric, marked the projects (they ranged from book reviews on "individuals who dared" to impressive posters, tapes and videos revealing the students' volunteer activities). Students enjoyed the project so much they held a Fair to showcase their works to parents and next year's freshmen and also designed their own Web site. This practice, which certainly led to high student involvement, can be replicated by following these specific steps and those indicated in answer #4.

2. List the Curriculum Content Standards, including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards, addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standards. Provide an example to substantiate your response. The "Fabulous Forty" activities in the portfolio address a cross-section of both the Curriculum Content and Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards:

- *Write a newspaper editorial, create a cartoon or design a computer flyer based on the actions of someone who stands up for his ideals.* Core Curriculum Content: Writing with a purpose/information: LAL 3.3 (4,8,15); Refining technical skills through art project: VPA 1.2 (1-4) and creating work that communicates ideas: 1.5 (10); Using information, technology: Cross-Content Standard 2 (4,5,6,7).

- *You are a lawyer. Prepare the opening statement of the trial of Copernicus or Galileo.* Core Curriculum Content: Writing with a purpose: LAL 3.3 (4,5,8,15); Understanding scientific endeavor: Science 5.3 (1-7); Self-management skills: CCS 4 (1-11).

- *Design a time chart for an important historical event or scientific breakthrough.* Core Curriculum Content: Understanding historical causation: SS 6.3 (9) scientific development: 5.3 (4-7); Using technology and other tools: CCS 2 (5,6); Representing situations with tables, graphs: Mathematics 4.11 (7,8).

- *Design artwork, a computer flyer or create a chart that honors those who have been instrumental in protecting the environment.* Core Curriculum Content: Creating art project: VPA 1.5 (10); Representing situations with tables, graphs: M 4.11 (7,8); Using technology: CCS 2 (7-10); Understanding effects on environment – S 5.12 (4); Using critical thinking, problem-solving skills: CCS 3 (1,2,3)

- *Select a sport that has helped you or others. Write a report, create a poster or compose a song for next year's freshmen that will motivate them to join this sport.* Core Curriculum Content: Writing a report LAL 3.3 (18); Creating poster VPA 1.5 (10); Composing an original song: VPA 1.2 (3,4); Developing sport skills Health & P.E. 2.5 (6,7,8); Self-management skills, cooperative work CCS 4.

- *You are a musical instrument. Show what you have done for mankind in a written report or chart; try writing your account in a foreign language.* Core Curriculum Content: Writing a report LAL 3.3 (18); Recording response to music: VPA 1.1 (1-4); Using critical thinking creatively: CCS 3 (15); World Languages 7.1 (2-9).

- *Some individuals have made significant advances in the world's health by promoting good nutrition. Design a chart that shows their accomplishments.* Core Curriculum Content. Learning about nutrition/life: Health & P.E. 2.2; representing situations with tables: M 4.11 (7,8); Self-management: CCS 4

- *Describe a service project in which you have participated and the gains you have made.* Workplace readiness through volunteer work: CCS 1 (8); Self-management skills and respect for others: CCS 4 (1-6).

3. Describe the educational needs of students the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine if the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice meets these needs.

The educational needs of students that the practice addresses are:
1. *A need to produce a cohesive, interdisciplinary unit that would be meaningful.*
2. *Our district had adopted a focus of being a "caring community": the high school wanted to foster the idea of good citizenship from the onset in high school.*
3. *Since "teaming" was not possible in the high school, we wanted a way for teachers to work with each other and the students collaboratively.*
4. *Students need to learn the value of giving service; the faculty felt the necessity of creating such an opportunity through a structured program.*

The assessment measures used to determine if the objectives/ needs have been met:
1. *To lead students in developing a portfolio on a common theme that connects learning with life. (NEED #1)*
   - In May when portfolios were due, 96% of the freshman class handed in portfolios that explored the theme of a "life of consequence."
   - Projects were marked on a score of 1 through 5 with 5 being the highest mark; 80% of the students received a grade of 4 or above on their portfolios.
   - Commentaries from teacher/markers indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the quality of the work. *(NEED #3)*
2. *To encourage students to become contributing members of society.(NEED # 2)*
   - The students themselves requested we hold a fair to show what they had achieved; they served as guides and role models for the incoming freshmen.
   - Students with the help of the Computer Applications class, developed their own Web page and volunteered their time for the project.
   - At least ten of the students demonstrated strong volunteer activities in sophomore year by organizing a new club, "The Good Will Ambassadors" and by organizing a walk for breast cancer.
3. *To promote service-learning in the school as an authentic instructional strategy.(NEED #4)*
   - The freshman developed a page for our Service-Learning portfolio. Our high school gained national honors by being selected as a Leader School.
   - Student journals revealed a high degree of satisfaction from service and from relationship with teachers .*(NEED #2)*
   - Two students addressed the Board of Education on the project's worth.
   - Three of our faculty attended the Service-Learning Conference in Washington, D.C.; they shared the CON*quest* unit as a successful strategy.
4. *To provide creative assignments that appeal to multiple intelligences while fulfilling the Core Curriculum and Cross-Content Standards.*
   - An examination of the diverse assignments reveals they call for differing talents and abilities. (See responses to question #2)
   - The assignments, while addressing the Core Curriculum and Cross-Content Standards in a creative way, also reinforce moral values and foster the habit of community and civic involvement. *(NEED #4)*

4. Describe how you would replicate this practice in another school or district.

This practice can be replicated by following these major steps:

1. In designing an interdisciplinary unit for high school freshmen that fosters character education through learning and serving, first assemble a group of ninth grade teachers in different disciplines. You need their support.
2. Present your plan to the group; ask for advantages and obstacles.
3. Elicit ideas for a theme that will work. Although ours was "a life of consequence," you might try one that is tied in with your mission statement: showing tolerance, understanding different cultures, celebrating diversity. Once you've decided on theme, have a committee of volunteers select readings on the topic; the readings should be short, interesting and cause reflection.
4. Gain administrative approval; we also presented it to the Board of Education.
5. Break up into committees: Writing Introduction, Student Personality Profile, Rubrics for Marking, Portfolio Organization; Binder Design.
6. Order inexpensive looseleaf binders for the freshman class (ours cost .70 each); design an enticing label.
7. Late in the spring term we had our secretarial staff run off the readings (after getting copyright approval!) and the additional material divided into 5 categories: Let's Talk about Project CON*quest* (*Unit Explanation, Suggested Activities, Four Sample Assignments*); Introducing a Very Important Person (*Student Profile*); Readings to Spark Discussion; Presenting Your Own "X" Files *(Student Portfolio of 10 assignments)*; The Countdown: What's Your Rating? (*Rubrics for Marking Grades of 1 through 5*).
8. Assemble a model portfolio. It's very important that it be visually attractive.
9. Ninth grade teachers came in for one morning in late August/early September to assemble binders (given substitute's pay) and discuss how they would work unit. We counted out binders for each class, boxed them. A supervisor made a schedule to visit each class, present unit, answer questions and distribute binders. Next year we will present students with a computerized list of SPECIFIC county organizations that need help.
10. Periodic meetings of supervisor with ninth grade teachers; supervisor's follow-up visits with the freshmen in science and social studies class. Monitoring of students' progress by teachers and supervisors.
11. On a predetermined date (ours have been in May ('00) and April ('01), a team of students with a supervisor collects the portfolios and brings to central location.
12. A team of ten teachers for every 300 students is sufficient for marking; they are excused from class and given a substitute for two half-days. A grade (1-5 points) and a personal comment are given to each portfolio.
13. One teacher records marks on class lists. The bonus to the students: those points are added to the final grade of each of their four major subjects. Failure to hand in portfolio results in a loss of 5 points.
14. After portfolios are returned, student response determines the next step. Our students were so enthusiastic that they asked us to hold a CON*quest* Fair to showcase their projects to the incoming class. They invited their parents as well as the eight graders and their parents to show their successful CON*quest*!